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Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 68/100, contains an assessment of the assistance received by the Palestinian people, needs still unmet and proposals for responding to them. It describes efforts made by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to support the Palestinian population and institutions.

The reporting period is from May 2013 to April 2014. During this period, the Palestinian Authority continued to implement the Palestinian National Development Plan 2011-2013 and developed the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016. In support of these efforts, the United Nations developed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016, which focuses on six priority areas: (a) economic empowerment, livelihoods, decent work and food security; (b) governance, rule of law, justice and human rights; (c) education; (d) health care; (e) social protection; and (f) urban development, natural resource management and infrastructure. The financial resources required for the assistance provided through the Framework amount to approximately $1.2 billion. This complements the humanitarian programming outlined in the 2014 Strategic Response Plan for the occupied Palestinian territory, which has a total budget of $390 million.

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In July 2013, Israelis and Palestinians returned to direct final status negotiations, supported by extensive facilitation efforts led by the United States of America and assisted by the Quartet. The parties agreed on an agenda encompassing all core final status issues and on the goal of reaching a comprehensive agreement within nine months. However, despite the resumption of negotiations, the situation on the ground continued to deteriorate with increased settlement activity and violence in the West Bank and a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

During the reporting period, the United Nations continued its efforts to respond to development and humanitarian challenges in the context of occupation, focusing particularly on areas where the Palestinian Authority was least able to extend its services, namely, Gaza, and Area C and East Jerusalem of the West Bank.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 68/100, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its sixty-ninth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution, containing an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people and an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them. Also included is a summary of key political developments and challenges relevant to the reporting period, as the international community continued to work to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, as well as to support the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority and negotiations between the parties. The reporting period is from May 2013 to April 2014.

2. Information on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people is provided in several reports prepared by other United Nations agencies, in particular: (a) the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (to be issued); and (b) the annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/68/13).

3. The humanitarian, economic and development needs of the Palestinian people are reflected in several complementary documents. The 2014 Consolidated Appeal Process, now called the 2014 strategic response plan, with a more targeted focus than in previous years, is seeking $390 million to address the most urgent humanitarian needs by enhancing the protective environment and tackling the food insecurity of the most vulnerable groups throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine presents the United Nations strategic response to Palestinian development priorities for the period 2014-2016, in alignment with the current Palestinian National Development Plan. UNRWA programme goals for the period 2010-2015 were reflected in the Agency's medium-term strategy, which was estimated at $639.4 million for 2013-2014, excluding emergency relief interventions. The Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016 outlined priority development needs amounting to roughly $12 billion.

4. Throughout the year, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) continued its efforts to support the peace process and to ensure effective coordination among the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations, the international community and the Government of Israel. The Office also continued to document the economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, and to develop policies and programmes to improve them.

II. Overview of the current situation

A. Political context

5. In July 2013, for the first time since October 2010, Israelis and Palestinians returned to direct final status negotiations, supported by extensive facilitation efforts led by the United States of America. The parties agreed on an agenda encompassing all core final status issues and on the goal of reaching a comprehensive agreement within nine months. The Quartet welcomed the resumption of talks and reiterated its shared commitment to helping the parties to achieve a negotiated two-State solution within the agreed time frame. In accordance with the agreement, the first round of talks was held on 14 August, in Jerusalem, following the release of a first tranche of pre-Oslo Palestinian prisoners. The Secretary-General travelled to the State of Palestine, Israel and Jordan on 15 and 16 August to lend support to the process.

6. Dialogue intensified during the autumn of 2013, with some 17 rounds of talks. The repeated announcement of settlements with each release of prisoners, however, complicated the negotiation efforts. Since the beginning of 2014, such efforts have focused on articulating an agreed framework on all core issues as the guiding basis for continued negotiations towards a final status agreement. Secretary of State Kerry has pursued his shuttle diplomacy between the sides.

7. International support for the renewed peace talks, including through the Quartet and key Arab, regional and other stakeholders, has been steadfast. On 20 January 2014, at the Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East, the Secretary-General reiterated the need to help Israelis and Palestinians to draw back from a dangerous status quo, since the failure of political progress could fuel a downward spiral on the ground.

8. On 28 March 2014, citing a lack of political progress in the peace talks, Israel postponed its decision to follow through with the release of the fourth and final tranche of 30 pre-Oslo Palestinian prisoners. In response, on 1 April, and following the announcement on the same day of 708 reissued tenders for settlement units in Gilo, President Abbas announced that the Palestinian leadership had unanimously voted to join 15 international conventions and treaties. The accession instruments to 13 of those applications, including an optional protocol, were deposited with the Secretary-General on 2 April and all States concerned have since been informed through the circulation of depository notifications. Accession to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and an additional protocol came into effect retroactively. President Abbas nevertheless remained committed to continuing negotiations until 29 April. Despite continued meetings between the parties to overcome the impasse and to agree to an extension of the negotiating period on a different basis, on 24 April Israel suspended its participation in the talks in response to the announcement one day earlier of an intra-Palestinian unity agreement on the formation of a national consensus Government. Israel stated that it would not negotiate with any Palestinian Government backed by Hamas that does not recognize Israel's right to exist. The initial nine-month framework for negotiations lapsed on 29 April. At the time of writing, it remains unclear whether the parties will be able to find their way back to meaningful negotiations. In the meantime, the Secretary-General has appealed to both Israelis and Palestinians to exercise prudence and to avoid unilateral steps that would diminish the prospects for a negotiated final settlement.

9. The political impasse was compounded by a volatile situation on the ground with negative trends in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and a fragile calm in Gaza. Since mid-December 2013, clashes between Israeli forces, Israeli settlers and Palestinians have increased in frequency and intensity, particularly in and around refugee camps. Palestinian stone- and Molotov cocktail-throwing has also been on the rise and has resulted in some injuries and material damage. Settler attacks against Palestinians and their property, including attacks against orchards and one arson attack on a mosque, have also continued despite Israeli efforts to crack down on perpetrators of so-called price tag attacks. Palestinian security forces have continued working to maintain law and order in areas under their control in the West Bank.

10. The settlement restraint observed in the spring of 2013 has since been unravelling, including in East Jerusalem, with announcements relating to the approval of settlement units, including one relating to the approval of 24,000 units, since stopped, in November 2013. The United Nations position on the illegality of settlements remains firm. On 19 July, the European Commission, drawing on earlier Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, issued guidelines stipulating that it would only provide grants to and maintain relations with Israeli institutions within the 1967 line. The guidelines prescribe that any Israeli legal entity receiving funding from the European Union would have to state that it has no links to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In February 2014, plans to build over 2,000 new settlement units were announced. Demolitions of Palestinian property also continued. Tensions increased around the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, including over visits of right-wing Israeli politicians to the compound and an inconclusive Knesset debate on 25 February on extending Israeli sovereignty over the holy site. The Secretary-General has reiterated the United Nations position that the status of the Old City and the religious sites within it are sensitive final status issues to be resolved only through negotiations and that the parties should refrain from attempts to establish facts on the ground and to alter the character of the Old City. The situation of Palestinians in Israeli administrative detention, some of whom undertook hunger strikes, has remained of grave concern. Palestinians also organized demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza to express concern over the health of sick Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention.

11. In Gaza, the calm has been eroding with several episodes of rocket fire into Israel, border incidents and dangerous escalations. During the summer of 2013, several measures were taken by Israel to relax the closure regime, including the extension of the fishing limit from 3 to 6 nautical miles. By the end of November 2013, i.e., one year after the ceasefire understanding, the situation in Gaza had once again deteriorated, with renewed violence and worsening socioeconomic conditions. Following the discovery in October of a tunnel extending into Israel built by Hamas, Israel suspended the import of construction material for international projects through the Kerem Shalom crossing. This decision has since been partly reversed for United Nations projects. Ongoing political and security developments in Egypt have also led to the continued closure of tunnels, the tackling of illegal smuggling and the frequent closure of the Rafah crossing. Between 11 and 13 March, more than 70 rockets and mortar shells were fired towards Israel. These incidents, responsibility for the majority of which was claimed by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, did not result in injuries or significant material damage. Israel conducted a number of air strikes into Gaza in March 2014, resulting in the death of five militants

reportedly affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad and injuries to two Palestinian civilians, while an additional three civilians were injured by live fire from the Israel Defense Forces in the vicinity of the barrier. On 5 March, Israeli naval forces intercepted a ship in the Red Sea, allegedly transporting arms, including missiles, from the Islamic Republic Iran to the Gaza Strip.

12. The full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which entails overcoming the Palestinian political divide in ways that should advance the potential for a two-State solution, continues to represent the most viable option to stabilize and improve the situation in Gaza while addressing its structural problems. The unity agreement announced on 23 April provided for the formation of a Palestinian Government of national consensus within five weeks and the holding of presidential and legislative elections within six months thereafter. Addressing a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Central Council meeting on 26 April, President Abbas reiterated that this agreement will be implemented under his leadership and on the basis of PLO commitments, which would hold the future Government of National Consensus to recognition of Israel, non-violence and adherence to previous agreements. He also emphasized that an agreement on this basis and continued peaceful negotiations should not be viewed as contradictory. The United Nations continues to believe that a unity agreement implemented on the terms described by President Abbas would constitute an opening that offers, at long last, the prospect of reuniting the West Bank and Gaza under one legitimate Palestinian Authority, including by holding long overdue elections.

B. Humanitarian and socioeconomic context

Economic and fiscal developments

13. The Palestinian Authority continued to implement key economic and fiscal reforms, yet fiscal consolidation progressed slowly in 2013. The fiscal strain is evident through continued arrears accumulation and high public debt. In 2013, total revenues were 8 per cent below budget, while total expenditures were 2 per cent above budget, with net lending reaching 357 per cent of the budgeted amount. This resulted in a total deficit of $1.4 billion. In 2013, the Palestinian Authority received close to $1.3 billion in direct budget support, a sum higher than projected.[1]

14. In February, the Palestinian Cabinet approved a $4.2 billion budget for the coming year, reflecting a 9 per cent increase since 2013. The 2014 budget presents a current deficit of $1.3 billion and development financing needs of $0.3 billion.[2]

15. The weakening of real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 2013 is of real concern. In 2013, unemployment stood at 18.6 per cent in the West Bank and increased to 32.6 per cent in the Gaza Strip.[3] Women and young people continue to be particularly affected by the lack of jobs.

16. Concerns about the long-term prospects of the Palestinian economy continued to include the need for enhanced private sector activity, particularly in the

[1] Government of the State of Palestine, Ministry of Finance, Fiscal Operations: Revenues, Expenditures and Financing Sources Monthly Report, December 2013 (11 February 2014).
[2] Ibid., March 2014 (16 April 2014).
[3] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics; data available at http://pcbs.gov.ps/Portal/_PCBS/Downloads/Book2049.pdf.

productive sectors of the economy. This will require increased access to natural resources and the further relaxation of access restrictions on people and goods. It is estimated that the lifting of the restrictions on movement and access and other administrative obstacles to Palestinian investment and economic activity in Area C would result in potential additional output amounting to at least $2.2 billion per annum in valued added terms, a sum equivalent to 23 per cent of Palestinian GDP in 2011.[4]

Humanitarian developments

17. During the reporting period, 47 Palestinians were killed (19 in Gaza, including 10 militants; 28 in the West Bank; overall, 4 children and 1 woman) and 2,632 were injured (188 in Gaza; 2,444 in the West Bank; overall, 830 children and 77 women) by Israeli security forces.[5] In comparison, 258 fatalities and 5,492 injuries were reported during the previous period, mostly as a result of the conflict in Gaza in November 2012. Settler violence towards Palestinians resulted in 235 injuries (including 34 children and 11 women) in 83 incidents. In addition, an estimated 292 incidents against Palestinians led to damage to property, with at least 13,955 trees damaged. A total of 4 Israelis (including 2 civilians) were killed and 118 were injured during the reporting period, compared with 7 Israelis killed and 405 injured during the previous reporting period.

18. As at the end of December 2013, 154 boys between the ages of 14 and 17 were in Israeli detention for alleged security violations.

19. Between 1 May 2013 and 8 April 2014, a total of 663 housing and livelihood structures were demolished in Area C of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacing at least 1,120 persons, around half of them children. At least 2,320 additional persons were affected by the demolitions of housing and livelihood assets during the reporting period.

20. The latest socioeconomic and food security survey (2012) revealed a significant increase in food insecurity in the occupied Palestinian territory, from 27 per cent to 34 per cent, indicating that tackling food security remains a key humanitarian concern in the territory. In the West Bank, food insecurity levels reached 19 per cent and in Gaza, food insecurity levels reached an alarming 57 per cent.

Movement, humanitarian access and operational space

21. Access to and movement of Palestinians between most Palestinian urban centres in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, remained restricted during the reporting period. These ongoing restrictions on Palestinian access to land, social services and economic opportunities in East Jerusalem and Area C hinder development efforts, resulting in deteriorating living conditions and increased vulnerability. In Gaza, restrictions on land and sea access imposed by the Government of Israel remained in place.

[4] World Bank, Area C and the future of the Palestinian economy, Report No. AUS2922. Available from http://documents.worldbank.org.

[5] Figures cover the period from 1 May 2013 to 7 April 2014. Data collected by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

22. From May 2013 to March 2014, at least 300 incidents of delayed or denied access by United Nations and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff members were reported at Israeli checkpoints. Around half of these incidents occurred as United Nations staff crossed the barrier on the Jerusalem periphery.

Barrier

23. Construction of the barrier continued in the north-west of the Bethlehem Governorate in addition to rerouting works near Khirbet Jubara in Tulkarem as well as around Qalqiliya. The United Nations Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory established pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/17 of 24 January 2007 continued its outreach and claim intake activities. More than 42,000 claims and over 500,000 supporting documents were collected. Claim intake activities in the Tubas, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqiliya and Salfit Governorates were completed and the work in the Ramallah and Hebron Governorates is nearly finalized. Outreach and claim intake activities in the Bethlehem Governorate have also been initiated.

III. United Nations response

24. In 2014, the United Nations and its partners, through the 2014 Strategic Response Plan for the occupied Palestinian territories, will continue to coordinate and deliver humanitarian and protection assistance, including food assistance, to 1.9 million vulnerable Palestinians, largely in Gaza, Area C of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the seam zone. The humanitarian strategy, which replaces the Consolidated Appeal Process, takes into account and is aligned with the cycle of the longer-term development strategies, particularly the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016, which in turn is supported by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016.

25. The United Nations system worked closely with the Palestinian Authority in developing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine, a strategic planning framework that guides United Nations development programming between 2014 and 2016 and is aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016. The Framework places the Palestinian people at the centre of development programming with the aim of enhancing human security, thereby laying the foundation for human development objectives in a context of occupation. The United Nations, through its extensive humanitarian programming, continued to provide essential assistance to Palestinians.

A. Human and social development

26. The United Nations continued to coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, to over 1 million people; water and sanitation assistance to over 1.5 million people; and health and nutrition services to nearly 2.5 million people in the occupied Palestinian territory.

27. United Nations development programming focused on capacity development, infrastructure and the provision of direct assistance and basic services. This work is centred on six strategic areas: (a) economic empowerment, livelihoods, decent work

and food security; (b) governance, rule of law, justice and human rights; (c) education; (d) health care; (e) social protection; and (f) urban development, natural resource management and infrastructure, as outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016. The estimated financial resources required for the assistance provided through the Framework amount to $1.2 billion for the period 2014-2016. At the time of writing, one third of this budget had been mobilized.

28. An important part of the United Nations development work in the State of Palestine is its activities in Gaza. Despite continued closures that still hamper operations, the United Nations implements a package of development works that are worth nearly $450 million and that generate employment in the construction sector, one of the few dynamic sectors in Gaza. For example, through UNRWA construction projects, 4,000 full-time equivalent jobs were generated in 2013. Combined, these jobs represented 8.1 per cent of all employment in the Gaza Strip and contributed to reducing the unemployment rate in Gaza by 5.5 percentage points.

29. Illustrative examples of the types of assistance provided by the United Nations are set out below.

Education

30. Nine United Nations agencies continued to support the implementation of the "Education for All" package for the State of Palestine, which is led by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to address capacity-building needs in inclusive and child-friendly education and early childhood development.

31. These agencies supported the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the opening of 44 preschool classrooms, 30 in the West Bank and 14 in Gaza, through the installation and equipment of 14 prefabricated units for preschool classrooms in Gaza and the provision of as well as technical support to the Ministry for the implementation of its new early childhood development strategy.

32. As part of the Education for All package, 70 pilot schools in the West Bank and Gaza (including 12 UNRWA schools) benefited from various education interventions, such as school-feeding programmes and capacity development programmes focusing on inclusive and child-friendly education, early childhood development and special educational needs.

33. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the capacity development of 21,094 teachers, principals and supervisors in the area of active learning strategies and the child-friendly school approach.

34. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) initiated support to vulnerable students through a new initiative that focuses on expanding access to resource materials and books through libraries and implementing a right to education advocacy strategy. It identified and equipped 12 libraries in the West Bank and Gaza with resources and trained 12 librarians.

35. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to implement the Al Fakhoura Scholarship Programme for Gazan students.

36. The International Labour Organization (ILO) continued to promote entrepreneurship education and to support the nationalization of the entrepreneurial education curriculum in all vocational training centres, industrial schools and

technical colleges. Five training activities took place in Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron for key national facilitators of vocational training centres.

37. UNRWA provided free primary education to approximately 283,307 students enrolled in 344 elementary and preparatory schools across the West Bank and Gaza. In Gaza, 71 per cent of schools currently operate on a double-shift system while in the West Bank, only 5 per cent of schools are temporarily on the double-shift system, to accommodate new school construction. Owing to funding constraints, UNRWA was forced to suspend school feeding to students in Gaza attending classes in the 245 schools.

38. UNICEF, along with its national partners, supported safe and protected access for around 8,980 children (26 per cent of them girls) to schools at 19 different locations including checkpoints, gates and schools most vulnerable to settler violence and harassment by the Israel Defense Forces.

Health

39. UNRWA continued to be a major provider of health-care services, operating 42 health-care facilities, 21 primary health-care centres, one hospital and one non-communicable disease referral centre in Gaza and the West Bank, employing over 2,000 staff. Annually, an average of 30,000 Palestine refugees in the West Bank received assistance for hospital-care costs.

40. In the West Bank, UNRWA operated six mobile clinic teams, which provided primary health-care services to 55 of the most remote or vulnerable communities. The teams provided an average of more than 12,000 patient consultations a month and covered a population of approximately 120,000 refugees and non-refugees.

41. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) completed a continuum of care project, which improved access to high-quality obstetric care for the most at-risk Gaza communities and expanded safe delivery services by establishing, rehabilitating and equipping key maternity and primary health-care centres. Moreover, it continued to work on strengthening family planning services by ensuring the availability of family planning commodities at all public service delivery points. Complementing these interventions, UNFPA reached 5,943 women with health promotion and awareness activities.

42. Through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, United Nations agencies continued to deliver life-saving drugs to patients through the Ministry of Health, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

43. UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) supported the Ministry of Health in procuring polio vaccines and coordinated a national immunization campaign from which 639,481 children under the age of five benefited.

44. UNICEF supported the provision and rehabilitation of equipment for at least eight neonatal intensive care units and trained health professionals on neonatal guidelines. Data from one of the targeted hospitals in Gaza showed a decrease in the neonatal mortality rate and in premature deaths. In addition, UNICEF supported the provision of equipment for maternity wards in two hospitals in the West Bank, which resulted in improved paediatric health services for 17,000 children and obstetric health services for 12,000 women.

45. UNICEF continued to implement the baby-friendly hospital initiative in nine hospitals and 45 health facilities in the West Bank and three hospitals in Gaza and reached 4,610 mothers and newborns through the postnatal home visits programme.

46. Approximately 3,500 Palestine refugees received individual psychosocial counselling services from the UNRWA West Bank community mental health programme in 2013. UNICEF scaled up its psychosocial programmes implemented in family centres in Gaza through five psychosocial emergency teams and through the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, reaching approximately 150,000 children, half of them girls (of whom 37,145 were adolescents), with professional psychosocial support services that helped to increase their resilience and coping mechanisms. These services included group counselling, individual counselling, emergency home visits, life skills, educational support and recreational activities. In addition, a total of 17,986 caregivers (35 per cent of them men) were reached through awareness-raising activities designed to improve parents' knowledge and skills regarding how to protect their children and provide better support to them, especially at times of crisis.

Water and sanitation

47. In the West Bank, UNICEF supported water quality monitoring of cisterns benefiting 570 families and implemented the water and sanitation in schools programme, which involves the construction and rehabilitation of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in 55 schools. Once completed, the programme will benefit more than 80,000 students.

48. UNICEF supported the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility in the initiation of the construction and installation of a short-term low-volume seawater desalination plant in Gaza.

Employment

49. ILO implemented a programme to support livelihoods and job opportunities in the fishery sector in Gaza. Using participatory value chain analysis and a series of training activities that were adapted to the needs of individuals, groups and associations in the sector, the project facilitated the development of a Gaza sector recovery plan while also fostering dialogue among stakeholders in various sectors.

50. United Nations agencies continued to support income-generation and self-employment opportunities for vulnerable Palestinians. UNDP targeted around 4,000 families across the West Bank and Gaza and focused on income-generating activities in microenterprise and small enterprise development, housing, education, health and rehabilitation. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), through 41 women's centres, focused on job opportunities in food processing and marketing. The programme directly benefited 536 women workers and over 35,800 women benefited from the services provided at the centres. Through the programme, 23 women's centres have reached financial sustainability. The activity also benefited more than 258 schools and over 100,000 schoolchildren who receive healthy and affordable snacks made by women from the community-based centres. Moreover, 800 Palestine refugee women were trained through the young women leaders programme implemented by UNRWA in Gaza. The programme aims to close a skills gap in the labour market by ensuring that women are developing skills demanded by the labour market through theoretical and

practical training courses, work placement schemes and small- and medium-enterprise training. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported 19 women's cooperatives and their members in achieving improved economic conditions through training to strengthen their marketing skills and the provision of tools to improve the marketability of their products.

51. On 1 December 2013, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) delivered and installed a new high-tech gantry container scanner at the Kerem Shalom crossing.

Targeted social protection

52. In Gaza, UNRWA distributed 426,221 food parcels to 21,638 Palestine refugee households, but was forced to suspend cash assistance owing to budgetary constraints. It also distributed 101,970 food parcels and $1.1 million in supplementary cash assistance to 11,358 Palestine refugee households through its social safety net and special hardship cases programmes in the West Bank. The World Food Programme (WFP) continued to support the Palestinian Authority's social safety net programme. In 2014, it reached 214,230 people in the State of Palestine through the programme with general food distribution and food vouchers.

Culture

53. UNESCO continued its cultural conservation activities across the West Bank and Gaza. It provided financial and technical assistance for the Riwaya Museum in Bethlehem and continued excavations, research, public awareness and the construction of the visitor's centre at the Tell Balata Archaeological Park in Nablus. In Gaza, emergency conservation activities at the archaeological site of Saint Hilarion Monastery/Tell Umm Amer continued through a partnership with the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem and the Islamic University of Gaza.

54. UNESCO also continued its project to build local capacity in cultural heritage preservation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The project enhanced conservation skills and knowledge with an emphasis on young architects and workers, promoted cultural tourism, raised public awareness of the values of the cultural heritage, introduced the socioeconomic aspect of cultural heritage preservation by creating job opportunities and provided facilities for public use. Through the project, six buildings and spaces were renovated.

Food security and agriculture

55. Through the agriculture sector revitalization activities of FAO, 350 farmers received intensive training on integrated pest management, global good agricultural practices certification, integrated crop management and integrated plant protection.

56. UNDP finalized the development of an additional 2,400 dunums[6] for poor farmers in areas of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, that are in direct proximity to Israeli settlements or in the seam zones, bringing the total reclaimed land to approximately 12,000 dunums in 2013. it also supported land development

[6] A dunum is equivalent to 1,000 square meters or 0.1 hectares (i.e., 10 dunums equals 1 hectare).

activities to ensure the sustainable use of land, primarily for olives, stone fruits and other seasonal field crops.

Human rights, women, children and youth

57. Five United Nations agencies launched a joint programme to strengthen respect for the human rights of persons with disabilities through legislation, in compliance with the Palestinian Disability Law and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to mainstream considerations for persons with disabilities in schools and employment services. This will be achieved through a close partnership between Government ministries, United Nations agencies, organizations for persons with disabilities and other key stakeholders.

58. United Nations agencies continued to support the special needs of women, including by addressing gender-based violence. UN-Women established 49 women's centres for survivors of gender-based violence and eight community-based women's centres that also served as shelters. More than 300 women benefited from psychosocial, social and legal counselling services at the first multipurpose anti-violence centre in Gaza and a monthly average of 20 women benefited from protection, sheltering and legal and psychosocial counselling at the Mehwar Centre for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Families in the West Bank. UNRWA reached nearly 10,000 Palestine refugees in community-awareness and prevention activities relating to gender-based violence, children's and human rights, domestic violence, neglect and sexual abuse.

59. United Nations agencies continued to improve the quality and provision of legal services for women. UN-Women trained 20 lawyers in integrating gender perspectives into their litigation and 18 women inmates in Palestinian detention centres benefited from legal counsel and representation as well as rehabilitation activities. UNDP provided legal awareness sessions to over 1,890 people (1200 in Gaza and 693 in the West Bank) and legal aid, including advice and representation, in over 1,000 cases (350 in Gaza and 741 in the West Bank), mostly focusing on providing assistance to women. During the three years of this programme, more than 45,000 women were provided with legal aid services.

60. UNESCO provided training to female journalists in Gaza and the West Bank, in recognition of their unique role as defenders of human rights and providers of information. Training focused on personal safety, risk assessment, conflict management and freedom of expression.

61. In partnership with the Higher Council of Palestinian Youth and Sport and NGO partners, United Nations agencies reached 10,000 adolescents (50 per cent of them girls), who participated in and benefited from community youth-led initiatives aimed at fostering their civic participation and strengthening their life and employability skills, thereby reducing their marginalization. Furthermore, UNFPA and its national partners launched the Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER) as part of the global Y-PEER.

62. UNICEF continued to lead the inter-agency working group for the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). The working group's database enabled partners to document incidents of grave violations affecting children and to produce detailed analysis of

the type of military or armed group activity or settler violence affecting the functioning of schools. School teachers and principals in 186 schools in vulnerable areas affected by conflict were trained in documenting education-related violations, resulting in improved reporting accuracy.

Environment, housing and urban development

63. FAO supported efforts to develop natural resources through the rehabilitation of 1,000 dunums of grazing land and the distribution of over 350 ton of drought-tolerant seeds and shrubs.

64. UNDP provided support for adequate housing to nearly 80 low-income families through rehabilitation and renovation interventions in Jerusalem. In addition, it provided support to improve the economic infrastructure by enhancing the physical situation of seven shops and businesses in the Old City of Jerusalem, including three bakeries, one olive press, one hostel and two shops.

65. In Gaza, the United Nations Mine Action Service substantially reduced the threat posed by explosive hazards through improved protection works. As a result, all unexploded ordnance was moved from urban areas to the pre-demolition store established outside Gaza City and 8.5 tons of explosive hazards from both sides to the conflict were destroyed.

B. United Nations system emergency assistance

66. The 2014 strategic response plan for the occupied Palestinian territory is seeking $390 million, similar to the level of funding requested by the 2013 Consolidated Appeal Process for the occupied Palestinian territory. The 2013 Consolidated Appeal Process has received 66 per cent ($265 million) of the requested $401 million in funds. While humanitarian needs have increased, the level of funding requested by the 2014 strategic response plan represents a more targeted approach to address the most urgent needs and improve the distinction between humanitarian and development assistance. As with previous years, the 2014 strategic response plan maintains a focus on tackling entrenched levels of food insecurity, serious protection and human rights issues and the limited access of vulnerable Palestinian communities to essential services, particularly in Gaza, East Jerusalem, Area C of the West Bank and the seam zone.

67. In addition, the UNRWA Emergency Appeal for 2014 is requesting $300 million to meet the needs of some 2 million Palestine refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. Most of the funding requested and received in 2013 was for emergency programmes in Gaza; of the $245 million requested, $115 million was received. In the West Bank, of the $55 million requested, nearly $29 million was received and allocated to emergency programmes.

68. The energy situation in the Gaza Strip remains extremely fragile. During the reporting period, the United Nations, with contributions from Turkey and the Islamic Development Bank, put in place a safety net to replenish the on-site reserves of a number of critical energy facilities. Nevertheless, the current situation highlights the need to find a structural solution to Gaza's energy problems.

Emergency food support

69. In Gaza, UNRWA delivered an additional 530,000 emergency food aid parcels to nearly 140,000 Palestine refugee families, benefiting 748,040 individuals living in abject or absolute poverty. UNRWA and WFP continued their joint assistance programme for marginalized Bedouins and herders, both refugee and non-refugee, in the West Bank, reaching 30,507 individuals with food distributions. In response to Winter Storm Alexa in December 2013, WFP distributed ready-to-eat food to about 10,000 people residing in shelters in Gaza and distributed food to 1,000 individuals and food vouchers to 250 individuals in the West Bank.

Emergency income generation

70. During the reporting period, the UNRWA job creation programme provided 40,285 refugees with job opportunities in 19 Palestine refugee camps and over 350 cities and villages throughout the West Bank, injecting $16,726,647 into food-insecure/food-vulnerable households and reaching a total of 115,733 beneficiaries (hired workers and their families).

Emergency health support

71. The UNRWA emergency health programme in the West Bank supported 25 primary health-care centres located in protection incident-prone locations, serving an estimated 270,000 Palestine refugees. In 2013 a total of 218,087 patient consultations were provided, of which 56 per cent benefited women. UNRWA, through individual and group counselling, family support and psychosocial activities for communities facing protection threats, provided psychosocial services to 49 Bedouin communities in the West Bank, serving an estimated population of 10,500 Palestine refugees. This included communities located in military zones, communities living in close proximity to settlements and communities threatened with demolition orders or facing severe access and movement restrictions.

72. WHO continued its support aimed at reducing shortages in life-saving drugs and medical disposables. Furthermore, it assisted in filling a number of gaps in the supply of pharmaceuticals and continued to help to coordinate the import of medical supplies donated to the Gaza Strip. It also provided urgently needed technical assistance, medical equipment and spare parts to maintain, repair and improve existing equipment, including generators and medical equipment damaged, as a result of the unstable power supply and frequent blackouts due to fuel shortages. UNICEF, meanwhile, provided life-saving paediatric drugs and consumables to cover needs in Gaza for three to six months as acute shortages worsened as a result of the limited opening hours of the Rafah crossing.

Emergency water and sanitation support

73. UNRWA supported water, sanitation and health service providers operating inside and outside the Palestine refugee camps in Gaza in procuring fuel and other supplies needed for critical operations and managed solid waste collection in all eight Palestine refugee camps. In the West Bank, it supported sewage and storm water networks and rehabilitated a water treatment plant in Aqbat Jaber refugee camp.

Emergency agriculture support

74. FAO supported the land rehabilitation of 160 dunums of open-field vegetable production for 80 farming households, the provision of tools and gardens to over 120 male-headed and 550 female-headed farming, herding and peri-urban poor households and the provision of small-scale animal units or fish ponds to over 500 male-headed and 400 female-headed households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It also rehabilitated water cisterns/wells for 750 families (7,800 individuals) to safeguard assets and expand livelihoods.

75. FAO also provided a quick response to Winter Storm Alexa by rehabilitating animal sheds, benefiting 1,200 livestock herders in Gaza and the West Bank. In addition, 740 small-scale farmers benefited from greenhouse rehabilitation. The emergency response was carried out in close coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture with regard to needs assessment, field verification, provision of materials and installation phases. The selection of materials and installation followed the "Build Back Better" approach, which ensured that the rehabilitated structures were technically sound and had a high level of resistance to future shocks.

Emergency education support

76. With the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNICEF scaled up the psychosocial programmes implemented in family centres and adolescent-friendly spaces in Gaza through five psychosocial emergency teams, benefiting approximately 150,000 children, half of them girls, with professional psychosocial support services that helped to increase their resilience and coping mechanisms. These services included group counselling, individual counselling, emergency home visits, life skills, educational support and recreational activities. In addition, a total of 17,986 caregivers (35 per cent of them men) were reached through awareness-raising activities designed to improve parents' knowledge and skills regarding how to protect their children and provide better support to them, especially in times of crisis.

Emergency housing support

77. During the reporting period, UNRWA provided emergency assistance, including cash assistance, to 108 families (603 individuals) affected by Winter Storm Alexa and 208 families (1,219 individuals) affected by incursions by the Israeli security forces and home demolitions in the West Bank. In Gaza, UNRWA provided emergency assistance, including cash assistance, to 1,103 families affected by Winter Storm Alexa and 528 families impacted by the destruction or damage of their homes as a result of Israeli military action in November 2012.

C. United Nations system support to Palestinian institutions

78. The United Nations provided technical support to line ministries for the development of sectoral strategies that informed the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016. The Plan reflects the thematic priority areas and geographical focus areas included in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016, indicating strong alignment between the approach of the United Nations to development programming and the development objectives of the Government of the State of Palestine. In addition, the

Plan reflects the United Nations programming principles of results-based management, gender equality and human rights.

79. The United Nations continued to provide technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of the Government of the State of Palestine in the area of mainstreaming human rights. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) worked closely with the Government in the preparation of a guidance document that provides concrete human rights-based goals, targets and interventions for incorporation in the Palestinian National Development Plan. This guidance document was adopted by the Government in January 2014. OHCHR published a study recommending which Palestinian laws should be revised to ensure compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and held workshops for Government officials on reporting procedures under these instruments.

80. UN-Women continued to support the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in upholding international human rights standards on protecting women against violence and supported the establishment of an observatory on women's access to justice under the Independent Commission for Human Rights. Fifty-four cases involving violence against women have been monitored thus far. UN-Women continued to provide technical support to the Ministry of the Interior in line with the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women. Ten Family Protection Units have been established in addition to the Family Protection Unit headquarters. Specific standard operating procedures have been developed for the Units and Unit staff were trained to ensure the quality and standardization of support.

81. ILO finalized an actuarial assessment that provides different scenarios for a new social security scheme. The assessment presented proposed provisions and contribution rates for a social security scheme that includes long-term benefits (old age, disability and survivors' pension), maternity benefits and employment injury benefits for private sector workers. It also supported the relevant national committee in the drafting of the legal framework of the proposed scheme to ensure it is in line with ILO standards and best practices worldwide.

82. UNOPS continued its programme of enhancing the operational capacity of the Palestinian Civil Police, the national security forces, the Presidential Guard and other security services, including the Civil Defence in their disaster risk response responsibilities. This was achieved through the provision of training programmes and equipment, information management systems development and infrastructure development. It also supported the Ministry of the Interior in a comprehensive institutional assessment in preparation for its multi-year institutional reform programme. In addition, it supported the Ministry of Justice in the construction of a major court facility in Tulkarem in the West Bank.

83. WHO supported the Ministry of Health in implementing its package of essential non-communicable disease interventions for primary health care, which was successfully introduced in three pilot districts. In addition, it continued to support the establishment of a National Institute of Public Health. It also supported the development of a cause of death registry and cancer registry, developed a draft report on the systematic review of water quality and health in the Gaza Strip,

finalized the National Health Information System strategy and assessment report and initiated the development of a national road traffic accidents registry.

84. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, building upon their previous collaboration, continued to strengthen the institutional and functional capacities of the Palestinian Shippers' (exporters and importers) Council. Its support led to the establishment of an eight-module professional training programme dedicated to international trade facilitation and logistics. It also provided the Palestinian private and public sectors with advisory services and technical knowledge in the area of trade facilitation.

D. Private sector development

85. UNRWA financed 13,030 loans valued at $18.403 million to Palestinian businesses and households in 2013. Women and youth received 37 per cent and 34 per cent of these loans, respectively. The programme in the State of Palestine continued to run on an operationally self-sufficient and sustainable basis and earned a net income of $367,865 from its microfinance operations.

E. Coordination of United Nations assistance

86. Under the auspices of the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process/United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, collaboration and coordination among the numerous donor and United Nations forums was strengthened during the reporting period. The humanitarian country team in Jerusalem and the Operational Coordination Group in Gaza met regularly to agree on humanitarian advocacy and response measures. With the support of the Coordination Unit within UNSCO, the United Nations country team continued to coordinate its programming through the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016 in alignment with the priorities of the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016. Efforts to forge constructive partnerships among the United Nations, the Government of the State of Palestine and the broader aid community were strengthened. The United Nations continued the preparation of Ad Hoc Liaison Committee reports, strategies and guidance for development and humanitarian work in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Area C and, together with other humanitarian actors, the development of the 2014 strategic response plan for the occupied Palestinian territory.

IV. Donor response to the crisis

Budgetary and fiscal support

87. In 2013, the Government of the State of Palestine struggled to meet its financial obligations, since expenditures were slightly higher than expected and revenue was less than projected. Although external financing was higher than expected, the Government of the State of Palestine accumulated considerable arrears during the year, particularly to the private sector and the pension system, and increased its stock of debt to domestic banks to $1.2 billion by February 2014. The

external financing requirement for 2014 is estimated at $1.6 billion ($1.3 billion in budgetary support and $0.3 billion in development financing).

Donor coordination

88. The local aid coordination structure continued to serve as a key forum for donors and the State of Palestine. The coordination of humanitarian assistance and advocacy continued to be led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat during the reporting period.

89. One meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee was held during the reporting period, in New York on 25 September 2013.

V. Unmet needs

90. The 2013 Consolidated Appeal Process for the occupied Palestinian territory requested a revised amount of $401.6 million to tackle the most urgent humanitarian needs, of which 65.9 per cent was funded. Despite the increasing needs, the 2014 strategic response plan for the occupied Palestinian territory is requesting $390 million, since the application of the Plan's criteria means that only the most urgent needs have been highlighted and that the distinction between humanitarian and development needs outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016 has been improved. As at 7 April 2014, only 17 per cent had been raised, indicating a bleak funding forecast.

91. Additional support is also urgently needed for the UNRWA core budget, which faces a predicted shortfall of $68.2 million for 2014, as well as its 2013 Emergency Appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory for $300 million, which has an estimated $163.2 million shortfall.

92. United Nations agencies are seeking $1.2 billion to support development programming in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

VI. Challenges

93. During the reporting period, the continued closure of the Gaza Strip, the closing of illegal tunnels and a marked reduction in the operation of the Rafah crossing by the Egyptian authorities resulted in a more acute energy crisis and the reverse development or de-development of Gaza, thereby increasing humanitarian needs. Following the discovery of an illegal tunnel into Israel in October 2013, the Government of Israel halted the import of key construction materials into the Gaza Strip, including for United Nations projects. Although the United Nations has since seen a partial resumption of import for projects that had previously been approved, the private sector remains unable to import aggregate iron bar and cement. In addition, at the time of writing, over $100 million worth of United Nations construction projects submitted to the Government of Israel were still awaiting approval. In the West Bank, restrictions on movement and access, demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and the associated displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have all increased. Furthermore, significant settlement activity continues to take place in the West Bank, including East

Jerusalem, heightening tension on the ground. Overall, the fact that a credible political horizon has not moved tangibly closer, despite resumed negotiations, continues to negatively affect the operating environment.

94. Should talks once again break down, there is a risk that pressure on the State-building effort and international support to it would grow, while the focus could shift to humanitarian operations. If a credible political horizon does not move tangibly closer, this would also negatively affect the operating environment. In Gaza, as long as fundamental political issues are not resolved, United Nations activities risk being reduced to little more than stopgap measures, with the much needed structural interventions outlined in the 2012 report of the United Nations country team in the occupied Palestinian territory entitled "Gaza in 2020: A liveable place?" remaining unfeasible until a more conducive operating environment is restored.

VII. Conclusions

95. The operational context for the work of the United Nations during the reporting period remained challenging, while threats to the livelihoods of Palestinians, particularly demolitions, and the continued restrictions and divisions of Gaza continued to pose formidable obstacles to development in the State of Palestine. The United Nations will continue working towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel.